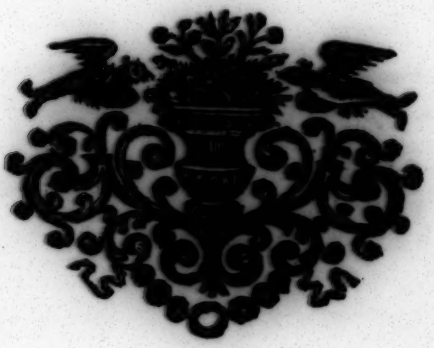
A LETTER TO A *MINISTER*, GIVING ADVICE How to act under TEMPTATIONS.

Θέατρον Ἐγενήθημεν.



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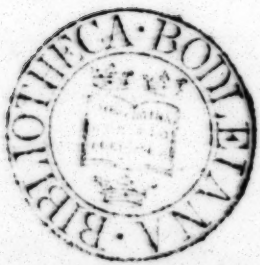
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A

LETTTER

TO A

MINISTER, &c.

REVEREND SIR,

FRIENDSHIP, being one of the moſt ſacred and deſirable things in humane Life, obliges us to regard the Offices which we are to perform to others with Exactneſs and Cheerfulneſs. It is, I muſt acknowledge, ſurpriſing, that one Inſtance of it hath not been ſhewn to Miniſters, who have maintained a good Correſpondence, with Perſons of the ſame Order; I mean, an Attempt to relieve and direct them under their *Temptations*. I doubt not but that this part of Chriſtianity may be cultivated in private Converſation, yet I do not remember, among the many Treatiſes which the preſent Century has produced, any one that diſcourſes on this Subject alone. It cannot be unuſeful, ſince I venture to ſay, and to juſtify the Truth of it, that amongſt Men, *Few are ſo unhappy as thoſe who ſerve at the Altar, if there be not another State, wherein they ſhall exiſt, after this preſent Life*. Were a truly conſcientious Miniſter to have his Choice, either to perſiſt in his Office, or to relinquiſh it, I am perſuaded he would never come into a Pulpit,

if *Eternity* did not conſtrain him. Poſſibly this may ſurprize you, and occaſion you to think that it ought to be on good Grounds that I advance ſuch an harſh Aſſertion.

§. I. That you may know for what Reaſon it is that I ſpeak thus, I would ſay, 'tis becauſe of the manifold *Temptations*, that befal them who are placed in an Office which is of Divine Original. The *Apoſtle of the Gentiles*, when he mentioned them, declared they drew *Tears from his Eyes*, *Acts* xx. 19. His Work was to preach the Goſpel, adminiſter the Sacraments, encourage the Piety of them who had made an Entrance on a religious Life; ſupport the weak, recover them who were declining, reprove them who were criminal. *Temptations* are Trials or afflictive Evils (for I take them to be of the ſame Import) which ſerve as an Experiment of the Truth of a Man's Grace, or the Strength of it, in one reſpect or another.

§. II. All Chriſtians have their Trials, but they who diſpenſe the Oracles of God, do feel the Effects of an unuſual Number of this ſort of Evils. I never knew a Miniſter but what had ſome more eſpecial Aſſaults of Trouble, than what are common to private Chriſtians. A Steward of the Divine Myſteries, whom God deſigns to make uſe of to be a Bleſſing to the Church, ſhall undergo things, which if they draw not Tears from his Eyes, will at leaſt occaſion many a ſad Thought in his Mind. If there be a Doubt of the Matter, let what I have to offer be conſidered.

§. III. Oftentimes before he enters on his Work, God doth ſo order it, that ſome ſignal Temptation ſhall attend a Star in the right Hand of the Redeemer.

Temporal Evils are among the Trials which Miniſters meet in their early Days. Some are brought to the Brinks of Eternity, and have thereby a true Proſpect of the other World, and are taught the Vanity of this Earth. By theſe Means are they the better prepared for preaching experimentally on Truths which are the principal in practical Chriſtianity. Others go

thro'

thro' perplexing and deſponding Cares, which cauſe many heavy Complaints to flow from them; or if Diſcretion teaches them to conceal their Griefs, they lye as Weights on their Spirits, for which they find little Relief, except from Prayer and God's Word.

When *John Baptiſt* was preparing for the Miniſtry he was in the Wilderneſs, *Luke* i. 80.

Solitude is attended with Temptations that are uneaſy to humane Nature; notwithſtanding it is not without its Delights to Men of a contemplative *Genius*.

Our bleſſed *Saviour* was aſſaulted by Satan in the Wilderneſs, before he enter'd upon the publick Diſcharge of his prophetical Office, *Matth.* iv. When God deſigns to make his *Prophets* ſerviceable to the ſpiritual Welfare of others, he ſuffers the Devil to aſſault them with fiery Darts, whereby they are the better capacitated to diſcourſe on that Head. Having felt the Anguiſh of a wounded Spirit, and experienced Divine Mercy in a Reſtoration to Tranquillity, they are qualified to adminiſter Comfort to others. And theſe Trials tend to make them grave and ſerious, which are neceſſary Qualifications in them, who are the *Salt* of the Earth.

The Temptations which befal them before their Entrance on the Holy Office are but ſmall, in Compariſon of thoſe which attend them, when they are ſo far engaged as not to be in a Capacity of retreating from their Work, with a ſafe Conſcience. For, ordinarily ſpeaking, ſhould Men be acquainted beforehand with what they are to undergo in the Diſcharge of this Function, I believe it would ſo amaze them, as to put them on making as many Excuſes for their not entring on this honourable but difficult Employment, as *Moſes* did, about his not appearing at the Head of the *Iſraelites*, when they were to be led out of the Houſe of Bondage.

I here take the Opportunity of admoniſhing young Divines to ſhun unwary Wiſhes, concerning the Deal-

ings of God's Providence with them [a]. Archbiſhop *Uſher*, the Glory of his Age, did give this Advice to ſome who thought *Afflictions* a neceſſary Mark of Adoption. 'That no Chriſtian ſhould tempt God to 'ſhew ſuch a *Sign* as a Mark of his paternal Love, 'but to wait and be prepared for them, and patient 'under them, and to conſider the Intention of them, 'ſo as to be the better for them.' This incomparable Perſon had in his Youth earneſtly pray'd that God would deal with him in that way, and from that time he was not without various Afflictions through the whole Courſe of his Life. It is certainly moſt adviſable to let Providence rule the World without preſcribing what Meaſures ſhall be taken as to our own particular Affairs. This was not unobſerved by one who had only the *Light of Nature* to direct his Thoughts [b].

Permittes ipſis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebuſque ſit utile noſtris;
Nam pro jucundis aptiſſima quaque dabunt Dii,
Carior eſt illis homo quam ſibi.

§. IV. I would not here be underſtood, as if every ſort of *Temptation* doth arreſt *all* Miniſters without Diſtinction: For God does order *Trials* according to what Purpoſes he has concerning his *Ambaſſadors*, as to the different Ways wherein he will by them raiſe a Revenue of Glory to himſelf. Some, *in the Diſcharge of their Work, meet with great Trials from them who are committed to their paſtoral Care.* Too many have Occaſion to complain of this Matter. Wonder not, if they *whoſe Good* we ſeriouſly deſign, whoſe Souls we pray for, whoſe Welfare both Temporal and Spiritual we endeavour to promote, ſhould be guilty of ſuch things as are afflictive to us. It is the *Temper* of apoſtate Man, and he who expects any better Treatment, does not underſtand the Degeneracy of humane Nature.

I would be more particular on this Article, becauſe it is oftentimes the *greateſt of Trials* which a faithful Mi-

[a] *Dr. Parr's Life of A. B. Uſher, p. 90.* [b] *Juv. Sat. 10. l. 347.*

niſter

niſter doth encounter, and which makes him complain as *Job* did, chap. vii. 3. *I am made to poſſeſs Months of Vanity, and wearisome Nights are appointed to me.*

§. V. *Unreaſonable Diſcontents among them who are under his Inſpection, are none of the lighteſt of his Temptations.* I have wonder'd at the Folly of ſome ſort of Perſons, who, notwithſtanding they have all the Mildneſs ſhewn to them, and all the Condeſcendence which an *humble Temper* ought to uſe; and it may be, have had Obligations laid on them, in other reſpects; yet are perpetually quarrelling as if they had their Birth in a Whirlwind, and their Education in a Tempeſt. Were it not that in our *Saviour*'s Time ſome follow'd him for the ſake of the Loaves, (*John* vi. 26.) it would ſeem incredible that any ſhould rage againſt their Miniſters, on ſuch Accounts; which, if they were not unſpeakably fooliſh, they would not mention, they are ſo trifling. Yet ſuch things fall out. Theſe Perſons give a plain Diſcovery of their being ſtill in an unconverted State. Let them pretend ever ſo high to the Profeſſion of Religion, yet, to me, 'tis a clear Proof of Unregeneracy for any Man to be a deliberate Enemy to a Miniſter; for he that is ſo, is an Enemy to *Chriſt*, and he who is an Enemy to *Chriſt* is accurſed, which no regenerate Man can have affirmed of him, *Luk.* x. 16. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 22. On this Occaſion, if I may be allow'd to give a Miniſter who meets with ſuch ſort of Trials an uſeful Hint, I would do it in the following Hiſtory, which I have ſeen in a MS. of unqueſtionable Credit [a]. 'Mr. *Dod* was uneaſy at the 'Univerſity, having the Overſight of ſome wayward 'ſort of Perſons; he deſigned a Removal. He pray'd 'that God would grant him theſe things. 1. That 'he might have a People that might love him. 2. That 'he might have competent Means to live on. 3. That 'he might do Good among them. He came to a Place, 'they vexed, ſued him, he had his very Horſe ſeized 'upon, and compelled to walk back on Foot. By the

[a] *Inter* MS. *Sch. D. H.*

'Way he ſate down under an Hedge weary in Body, 'and not very eaſy in his Mind. His Thoughts led him 'to conſider what ſhould be the Meaning of God's 'dealing with him in ſuch a ſevere manner. All his 'Deſires were croſt, yea, tho' he had deſired God's 'Glory chiefly, no Good was done, the People hated 'him, and he was made as poor as *Job*. Here he found 'that he had ſo mixed himſelf and his own Ends with 'God's Glory as to diſpleaſe him. This drew Tears 'from his Eyes, and as *Jacob* when he wept and pray'd, 'he prevailed with God and Man, his Affairs took a 'very remarkable Turn in the Converſion of the Pa-'tron, in an advantagious Change in many of his Au-'ditors.

We may on this Article do well to enquire whether a criminal Fondneſs for an eaſy indolent Life, has not provoked God to ſtir up theſe Intercourſe ſort of Perſons to be a Scourge to us. It is what ought to humble us, ſince in this ſort of Trial, our Circumſtances reſemble that of the *Ægyptians*, when the Plague of *Lice* was inflicted on that accurſed Nation.

To ſpeak freely, it has aſtoniſhed me that any ſhould behave themſelves in ſo ſcandalous a manner. But when I have more nearly conſidered it, my Wonder removed. I obſerved that ſuch things have been preached, as have galled their Conſciences and made them uneaſy, and hence ariſes the Malice of foul-mouth'd Hypocrites.

Some Perſons are of ſo perverſe a Conſtitution, that if they ſhould be plainly dealt with, they would rage like Mount *Ætna*, and never be reconciled to their faithful Monitor; but turn their Back on God's Worſhip. I am perſuaded that if ſome Perſons were reproved for that *darling Sin*, which will prove their Perdition, if not forſaken; they would *ſtorm* to that degree, as not to be exceeded by any in a Mad-houſe. If we reprove a *Vice*, they who are guilty will not pretend that to be the Cauſe of their Quarrel, but ſtart ſome other thing, and thereby take their Revenge. Nay that which ſeems incredible, Perſons of no Figure, and who have neither Birth nor Education, nor ſo much of

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Subſtance in the World, as to deſerve any ſort of Reſpect, beyond what is ſhewn to thoſe unto whom we give Alms, are ſo haughty and imperious, as to fall into the rudeſt Tranſports, if they are not addreſſed with the greateſt Submiſſion. Pride and Poverty too often go together, and we have more Trouble from one of theſe deſpicable Perſons, than from many who are far their Superiors in the World. To overlook their ill Manners and ridiculous Follies with a generous Contempt is the wiſeſt Courſe. This ſometimes is a Temptation to a Miniſter to reſolve never to deal plainly, but let the World be as wicked as it will; and Hypocrites remain as they are, and take the Doom which will be paſt on Men of that Character, *Jerem.* xx. 8, 9.

§. VI. A Man who hath this Truſt committed to him, and is faithful to Mens Souls, really deſerves the higheſt Honour. But it ſo falls out, that Satan oftentimes makes uſe of ſtinking-breatht Hypocrites to vent his Malice againſt him. It is an Argument that you are regenerate, if any outward Mark of Regeneration can be formed from Mens Circumſtances in this Life. For if you were a Stranger to a Principle of *Holineſs*, the Devil's Children, wicked Men, and Hypocrites, would not ſhew their Spleen againſt you. And it is ſurpriſing that any ſhould uſe ſuch Roughneſs in their Management, as to put a Miniſter on Complaints that are Indications of his Deſign to quit his Work for an Employment not ſo obnoxious to Envy; like him who in a Ferment was for leaving the World to eternal Darkneſs.

Datque animum in luctus, & luctibus adjicit iram
Officiumque negat mundo. Satis (inquit) ab æuo
Sors mea principiis fuit irrequieta, pigetque
Actorum ſine fine mihi, ſine honore laborum.
Quilibet alter agat portantes Lumina currus.

It's not to be denied, ſuch unaccountable Sallies againſt their *Guides* diſſipate the Vigour of a Miniſter's Reſolution of doing Good; yet they ſhould not make him

him lay aside the Thoughts of performing the Duties of his Office. Would but some sort of Persons bear to hear the Truth, I would say, 'As for them who neither regard God nor Man, we expect nothing better 'from them, than Abuses and Slanders: They are the 'Devil's Instruments; but as for you who profess Religion, and who, it may be, receive the Body and 'Blood of Christ from our Hands; we think you 'should not do Satan's Drudgery, by raising Disturbances and Quarrels, but leave that to Men of another 'Character.

Divine Providence will vindicate the Dignity of the Ministerial Office, in either blasting your Persons, Estates, or Families, unless you change your Conduct, *Deut.* xxxiii. 10, 11. As you carry it to your spiritual Father, your own Children may carry it to you. Some may read their Sin in their Punishment. It would be far more desirable to see Men have the Peace of God ruling in their Consciences, in their Families, and in the Christian Societies, to which they do belong, than to have them running themselves into the Hands of Divine Justice, by their opposing and disquieting them, whom God ever will defend.

§. VII. Hither may also be referr'd such who esteem themselves wonderful witty, if they can by an awkward or senseless Jest, affront the Ambassadors of Christ.

How just is the Providence of God in suffering these Persons to fall into Vanities and Follies in Speech and Conduct, which make them a Reproach and Scandal, and to be held in Derision, by all who know them?

When the incomparable *Calvin* and *Farellus* were banished from *Geneva* [a], for refusing the Sacrament to a loose Company; one in Drollery told them, *the Gate was wide enough for them both to pass thro' at once.*

But this *ill timed* Jest was terribly revenged by the Providence of that God whom those two excellent Men served; for not long after that unhappy Man who treated the Ministers so coursly, was imprisoned for a

[a] *Present State of* Geneva.

capital Offence, and eſſaying to thruſt himſelf out at a narrow Window, fell headlong, and in a few Days died miſerably.

How ſurpriſing have the Events of Providence been to ſome who have raiſed Lies to defame their *ſpiritual Shepherds*? God has let looſe the Tongues of others to ſcourge theſe Revilers, and it may be to raiſe falſe things of them, as they have done of the Officers in *God's Houſe*. And ſometimes that which is far more aſtoniſhing befals them.

One hearing a Sermon preached on *Prov.* x. 7. *The Memory of the Juſt is bleſſed, but the Name of the Wicked ſhall* ROT; ſcoffed at and ſaid the Miniſter preached a rotten Sermon [b]; preſently after hurting his Tongue with a little Wood he held in his Mouth, it ſwelled, rotted, and he dyed of it.

As for you who may ſuffer ſuch Abuſes, let me intreat you not to ſhew your Reſentments: If you ſee thoſe very Men who have been your Adverſaries, who have ſlander'd you, overwhelmed with the ſame ſort of Reproaches which they have caſt on you, do not rejoice at it, but rather mourn for the Sin which occaſioned their Calamity.

Endeavour alſo to be more holy in your Life; you may depend upon it, either God will ſend the moſt aſtoniſhing Blaſts upon your Enemies, or give them Grace to repent and become your Friends. Let me farther add, when it lies in your Power to do a Courteſy to thoſe who have abuſed you, embrace the Opportunity; doubt it not, you ſhall have a Reward from *Jeſus Chriſt* whom you imitate.

§. VIII. There are alſo ſome who do the Office of *Satan*, in ſecretly ſowing Diſcord in Places, and by little Artifices ſeek to prejudice People againſt their Rulers. I have obſerved that Providence has puniſhed them in the ſame kind, and they have become the Abhorrence of thoſe whom they have inflamed againſt their *Miniſters*. Events have fallen out which have made them

[b] Greenhill *on* Ezek. xi. 4.

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appear to be foul mouthed *Rabſhekahs*, and ſtinking-breatht *Jezabels*. I cannot adviſe you to continue your Acquaintance with ſuch treacherous and baſe Perſons. By a prudent Management put by their Malice, but by no Means revenge their Abuſes; inſtead of that, pray to God for them, and you may be aſſured you ſhall have Juſtice done you by the righteous Judge.

§. IX. Contempt of Admonition is alſo to be looked on as one of the Temptations that attend your Office; one Deſign of which is to reform Men by giving them Counſel. It becomes us to inſtruct Men in what they are to believe in order to eternal Life; but this does not ſuperſede our Care to admoniſh them of their Duty, *Eph.* iv. 1. How culpable are ſome, who inſtead of attending on God's Oracles with a Deſign of advancing in Chriſtianity, hear with a Deſign to find Fault? Such is their premeditated Malice that nothing will pleaſe them.

It may not be amiſs to enquire whether a Miniſter hath not been guilty of a *vicious Charity*, in receiving ſome who deſire to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, whoſe former Life has been tarniſhed with Impurity, which they have not ſincerely repented of. If theſe Perſons prove the moſt troubleſome of all under his Inſpection, it ſhould be a Caution to him to act with more Conſideration for the future. The *Apoſtle of the Gentiles* expreſſed his Fear as to the *Corinthians*. I would cite his own Words, 2 *Cor.* xii. 21. *And leſt when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I ſhall bewail many which have ſinned already, and have not repented of the* Uncleanneſs, and Fornication, and Laſciviouſneſs, *which they have committed.*

How ridiculous is it to hear them ſay, one Man does not preach the Goſpel, becauſe he urges the Neceſſity of an holy Life? Another is an *Antinomian*, becauſe he preaches Juſtification by Chriſt's Righteouſneſs? They ſay this Miniſter preaches *harſh* Doctrine, becauſe his Sermons have ſo much of Life, as that if Men will not forſake their flagitious Practices, and abandon their Hypocriſy, they cannot but feel Hell kindled

kindled in their Breasts, by what they hear, though it be in truth a real Kindness to preach in such a manner, that the Auditor shall not be able to run into eternal Flames, without preceding Horror and Amazement. They say of another, he is a Preacher of smooth Things, because he invites the most profligate Sinners to accept Divine Mercy. Some are angry at the length of a Sermon, others find Fault with the Subject they hear, and an impertinent sort of Hearers are offended at the Pronunciation. In short, they who are out of Temper are not pleased with any thing, but rather than fail of shewing their Alienation from Reason and Scripture, will pretend a Disgust at *Doxologies* which the Church has used in Defiance of the Heresies that overthrow the very Life of Christianity. How troublesome is it to have the Management of Men of this Character, who have neither Sense, Grace, nor good Manners? We have indeed one Relief, which is, They wander about from Place to Place, and so have not the Opportunity of reviling us every Lord's Day, which they scandalously do, whenever they hear us. Such Ramblers discover frequently, they have no more than common Convictions. Their Folly we may despise, tho' we lament the Doom which belongs to them, *Blackness of Darkness for ever*, being threatned to these Planets.

§. X. Moreover how great an Affliction must it necessarily be, to see Men act against the Light of their Consciences, as if they were resolved to bring Ruin on themselves, *Jerem.* xliv. 16. Admonish some Men of the Danger of the evil Courses they take, that *Sabbath breaking*, living without Prayer, and that a loose Conversation will certainly end in their Ruin, they will scarce have Patience to hear you. I know of no Object that calls for Commiseration more than a Sinner, who will not be reclaimed by serious Advice, were it not that his Wilfulness abates the Pity. This cannot but be a Trial to a Minister, *Jer.* xiii. 17.

Unprofitableness under his Preaching may be mentioned under this *Article*. You shall be rewarded for your Faithfulness, whether you be successful or not. God will accomplish his Designs, and have Glory from all Men, either as to his Justice or Mercy, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. Yet

it is a ſad Trial to think that your Sermons muſt at the Day of Judgment be produced to the everlaſting Confuſion of them who hear you.

§. XI. Furthermore, the ſcandalous Actions of them who profeſs Religion may be ranked among the Tryals which attend you. It cannot but be grievous to behold ſome who have the Vows of God upon them, who have ſeemed much affected with your Sermons, caſt off Religion, and apoſtatize into wicked Practices. This drew Tears from the Apoſtles Eyes, *Phil.* iii. 18. It deprives you of one of the greateſt Satisfactions which you can enjoy on Earth; ſince it is equal to Life it ſelf to behold them who profeſs Chriſtianity act agreeably, and to find them ſtedfaſt in their Reſolutions of glorifying God in an holy Life, 1 *Theſſ.* iii. 7, 8, 9. Their Defection muſt unavoidably be grievous, and that which adds a Sting to their Apoſtacy is, they have the Impudence to lay it to the Charge of their Miniſter; altho' their own Conſciences, as well as the ever bleſſed God, knew it to be as black a Lye as ever came out of Hell. I adviſe you (my Friend) to bear it with Patience; and let not this piece of finiſhed Malice provoke you ſo far as to make you forſake your preſent Charge, Their Attempts ſhall no more hurt you, than an Aſſault of [illegible] be able to ſhake an impregnable Caſtle. *Jerem.* i. 18, 19.

Have Patience and you will ſee thoſe Apoſtates, who like ſome unclean Spirits forſaking a Place, leave the filthieſt Stench behind them, reſemble them in Puniſhment, by the revenging Hand of the Almighty God, who ever has hitherto, and ever will confound the Malice of ſuch Miſcreants. For he ſeeth to the bottom of their Hearts, and whatever plauſible Pretences they make before the World, they cannot conceal from him the inward Spring of their Apoſtacy, which is ſome ſordid Luſt.

§. XII. But eſpecially, may the Wickedneſs of his own Children be eſteemed among the ſharpeſt of Trials, that wait on a Man who ſerves in the Temple. Poſſibly thro' an unjuſtifiable Fondneſs, he may forbear Diſcipline and Reproof when neceſſary; hereupon his Children be-

come infamous. How unſpeakable a Grief is it, when he reflects on the Diſgrace wherewith they are covered, whom he regarded more than the Honour of God? Not to mention other Relatives, whoſe Conduct, whether thro' a diabolical Furiouſneſs of Spirit, or want of common Senſe, makes them to be as Rottenneſs in a Man's Bones. Since this is not your Infelicity, I only ſay, the deepeſt Acknowledgments are due to Divine Grace, and paſs on to another Article.

§. XIII. You are alſo to expect manifold Temptations from the Devil. Some are buffetted by the Prince of Darkneſs, in a ſurpriſing manner, eſpecially are they under this Trial whom God deſigns for great Services. I believe God has other ways of humbling ſome, whom he does not ſuffer the Adverſary to aſſault in a violent manner. Their Circumſtances in the World may be ſuch, as that God doth in Mercy prevent their being attack'd by the infernal Hoſt, leſt they ſhould be as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* i. 8. *Preſſed out of Meaſure and above Strength.*

Men of Prudence avoid many Trials, and are ſo well furniſhed with wiſe Conſiderations, that the common Calamities of humane Life make not great Impreſſions on their Spirits. They are look'd on as bad Roads in Winter, or Clouds of Duſt in the Summer, neither of which makes a wiſe Man alter his Speech, or change his Countenance. If God makes uſe of ſuch a Man to bring conſiderable Honour to his Name, he permits Satan to buffet him, by which he is made to have a low Opinion of himſelf. I believe this is the Caſe of ſeveral whoſe Wiſdom conceals their inward Griefs in their Breaſts, where their Temptations are buried too deep to be diſcovered by Strangers. They have the moſt diſcouraging Apprehenſions, and a Dejectedneſs of Spirit that extreamly hinders their Uſefulneſs. Satan hath a great Advantage over Men whoſe natural Temper diſpoſes them to fear the worſt in every Event. Men that are of penetrating Thoughts are ready to ſuſpect greater Dangers in this or that Matter, than what are ſo in reality; which the Enemy knows how to make Advantage of, preventing their being ſo extenſively uſeful as they might otherwiſe be to Mankind.

The Devil has a great Power oftentimes to disturb the Tranquillity of a Minister's Mind, if he can so artfully manage his Designs as to draw him to act against the Light of his Conscience. In most Ages there falls out what the Scripture calls an *Hour of Temptation*. This is when any one particular fundamental Article of Faith is opposed or undermined. In which Case it is not strange that some should stand neuter, and others be prevailed upon with reluctting Consciences, to connive at Abuses offer'd to the *Son of God*, which yet they would not take kindly, should they be put on their Friends, tho' their Inferiors in this World. Let me beg you for your own Soul's sake to watch, lest you be seduced to act against the Light of your Conscience. If your very good Friends will separate themselves from you, or you must be separated from *Jesus Christ*, I presume you do not want to be told what Part of the *Dilemma* you ought to refuse.

I have met with a Passage in a MS. of very good Credit, which I am able to produce, I shall lay it before you. At the time when the zealous *John Rogers* made a Figure, there was a Minister who was judged to be a Godly Man, (as they worded it, in those Days when experimental Religion was in Fashion) yet wou'd not scruple to comply with any Ecclesiastical Injunctions. When the Book of Sports came forth, some whom he ought to have esteemed for their Quality and Virtue went to him, with a Design to debate the Matter and prevent his Compliance. The Man was determined to go on and read that unhappy Book.

But his puritanical Preaching was so offensive, that it was resolved to out him at any rate. A Hole was pickt in his Coat for not reading some Prayer, *&c.* They convened him and Mr. *Rogers* both on a Day. The chief Person in the Court spake to this Effect, unto this unhappy Man: *Thou shiftest, and stretchest, and goest against thy Conscience, in yielding to Ceremonies; but here is Mr. Rogers, he doth not do well indeed, but he shews himself to be an honest Man that will suffer for his Conscience, and stick to his Principles, but thou shewest thy self to be a Knave.*

To make short, the Man after this was struck with such a melancholick Scrupulosity, that he would doubt which Button to unbutton first, and other such things; he sickned and dyed about it. Thus the MS. in which these Words are added, *It is a thing worthy to be engraven in Pillars of Marble, for all Posterity to remember.*

§. XIV. Moreover you must not think to escape Temptations from the World. Every Christian must expect to be molested by evil Men in his Passage thro' this Wilderness, 2 *Tim.* iii. 2, 3. but more especially is a Minister to look for it. If this discourage us from our Master's Work, it is because we have not rightly computed things, at our first Entrance on this awful Employment. We must look for hard Entertainment because our Work is contradictory to the Spirit of the World; we are obliged to preach against those things which Men idolize. The Temptation lies here, we must either disobey the Command of *Christ*, who will one Day be our *Judge*, or in a sinful manner, in some things gratify Men of a worldly Temper, and carnal Designs.

Now he deceives himself who reckons upon the Friendship of this World and a clear Conscience, *Jam.* iv. 4. these Men will hate those who presume to controul them. From hence proceed the *Reproaches* which they liberally cast on Men of the brightest Character. *Elijah* was charged with troubling *Israel*. St. *Paul* was called a pestilent Fellow and a Mover of Sedition. *Athanasius* was calumniated as if he had been guilty of Murder and Sedition [a]. And one who has given half his Income to good Uses has been called *a covetous Wretch*. It is no more than what our Lord has warned us of, *Joh.* xv. 19. Our Business is to reclaim Men from Rebellion against God, and such Arguments must be used, as will [illegible] them who are given up to a reprobate Sense of Things; who unless restrained by Divine Providence will revenge themselves. The Prophet *Isaiah* found the Truth hereof [b]. The *Jews* murder'd him for calling their *Grandees* Rulers of *Sodom*, and the Nation it self *People of Gomorrah*. They pretended indeed, it was because he said

his *Eyes had seen the Lord of Hosts*. If you receive Evil from Men of this Character, do not retaliate it when it shall be in your Power. No, nor rejoice when you see the *very Evils* befalling their Persons or Families which they designed against you. A profane Wretch once hearing a Sermon, did, in Contempt, draw his Mouth awry, but the Minister's God smote that unclean Mouth, for it was by a Blast drawn very much aside, and the *Witless* Fellow died making *wry Faces*[a]. I have known them who have offer'd Abuses to Ministers, by endeavouring to blast their Names, have been reduced to such Circumstances, as to stand in want of the charitable Assistances of the Persons they have abused; and have had more heavy Reproaches falling on them, than what they designed against God's Embassadors.

When this shall come to be your Case, I beg you to assist your foolish Adversaries in Distress. God will give you inward Tranquillity, and your Reputation will be as the Sun when past an Eclipse, more admired and resplendent than ever. It is observable, that some who have censured the Ministers of the Gospel for Pride in Apparel, have been in such Circumstances, as to shew they are either of Opinion that what their *spiritual Overseers* have done is lawful, or that they themselves, who are imposed on by Satan in the Form of an Angel of Light, do allow, against their Consciences, what they have reproached in better Men than themselves.

Repine not at these things, for if any external Things can be an Argument of your own Regeneration, the Rage and Malice of wicked Men and Hypocrites against you shew it: For Satan's Agents are full of Malignity against Men of your Character. I shall not speak of the flattering Temptations which are offered to allure you from the holy Office to some other more profitable way of gaining a Subsistence in the World. The Negligence of them who should support you, may sometimes be so *base*, as to be a Temptation to forsake the Care of their Souls, whose Swine are more regarded than Christ himself would be, should he come to preach the Gospel among them. Nor is this all, for

§. XV. You are to expect some especial Trial as to the Events of Providence that will attend you. I must confess, it is difficult to give Advice about your Behaviour under some sort of Trials, and yet it is far more difficult to comply with the Advice, when all that can be said, is, *be resigned to the sovereign Pleasure of God.* The Ways of Providence towards some Persons are in the Deep. Such things fall out, as either dissipate their Resolutions of doing Good, or do very much incapacitate them from being useful.

Poverty is a great Trial. It does oppress the Spirit, when a Man doth not know whether he shall be reduced to beg his Bread before the Year comes to a Period.

I have observed in mine own Time, and in the History of past Ages, that God, in a wonderful Manner, makes Provision for them who serve at the *Altar*; notwithstanding which, it is a great Mortification to a Man of a generous Mind to be in such mean Circumstances as it would be a Shame to mention, were it not that we are directed to *Glory in the Cross of Christ.* The Apostle who was of great Zeal for the Church of God, and deserved as highly as any meer Man, gives this sorrowful Account of himself, 1 *Cor.* iv. 2. *We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.* You will say, by this course of Reasoning, no Man of common Sense will engage in the ministerial Office.

I Answer, I can't help it; but do not find that *Christ* has promised to his *Embassadors* an Exemption from this Evil. He has not said they should be attended by Kings and Princes, no nor have the Wealth of Men of lower Rank; but has promised them an eternal Crown of Glory. If we have not thought of these Difficulties, it is because we have not duly regarded or weighed the Articles of the Covenant that we entred into, when we engaged to be the Servants of a crucified Lord.

§. XVI. Another Trial is the Loss of *Reputation.* So deep are the Ways of God's Providence! Possibly your Reputation may be lost without any Default. Men who make Conscience of giving a certain part of their Estates to the Poor and good Uses, in other Respects, are trade-

ſcientious as to the Rules of Temperance, ſhall be ſtigmatized for Drunkards. The moſt humble ſhall be reproach'd for Pride, and they who are moſt Learned ſhall be undervalued as if they were Ignorant. So unſearchable is the Providence of God, towards them whom he loves above all Men in the World, 1 *Cor.* iv. 12, 13.

Some excellent Miniſters have been but little eſteemed by the Multitude, which is a ſort of Trial; but I think eaſily born. For if they ſee that Men who undervalue them are filled with Admiration of thoſe who are but *looſe* in their Morals, *fooliſh* in their Conduct, *Sermon Stealers* and *Hymn Robbers*, and every way defective in Learning, they may value themſelves the more for the Diſregards which an injudicious, and giddy, and uncatechiſed Rabble ſhew of them, their Piety and Learning. Other holy Men, as I have ſaid, have been great Sufferers as to their good Names.

Let not the Loſs of your Reputation provoke you to forſake the Principles which you have embraced. No Man can bear to live among a Party who pour Diſgrace upon him, except there be an uncommon Conviction upon his Mind of the Divine Original of his Principles. Learning alone, be it ever ſo great, will not protect a Man who is under ſuch a Temptation. *Hugo Grotius*, a moſt compleat Scholar, received uncommon Diſguſts from the *Proteſtant* Party; his Temper not being of Proof againſt this Aſſault, he did renounce his Faith, embraced the Council of *Trent*, whoſe Canons are the very Dregs of Popery [a], and he carried his Reſentments ſo far, as to ſtrike at the very Root of our Religion, by the moſt obſcene Notes on the *Canticles*, and by perverting the Senſe of the prophetical Part of the Bible, in Complement to the ROMAN ANTICHRIST, and the Abomination of *Racovia*. Thus did he attempt to revenge himſelf on the whole Reformation.

Let this be a Warning to them who excel in Learning and ſolid Worth, but fall ſhort in an acceptable way of Preaching, leſt the Diſguſts they meet with prove fatal. It is poſſible that one ſilly hot-headed Man

may by his venomous Tongue, cauſe the ſtrongeſt Prejudices in the Minds of ſome good Men againſt others, who were always with them in Principle. A Miniſter's true Character has been loſt, becauſe he did not in a ſervile manner court the Favour of an impertinent *Furioſo*.

In a Word, a ſickly State of Body is a Trial that ſome of ſhining Merit do undergo, and Pain and Anguiſh are ſometimes appointed to them who are employed to reconcile an apoſtate World to the Almighty God.

§. XVII. We are not to charge God fooliſhly becauſe theſe things fell out, tho' we cannot aſſign all the Reaſons which he hath for his Procedure. It ſhould ſeem that he ſuffers theſe Evils to befal his Miniſters, as a Puniſhment on incorrigible Sinners. It is a Judgment on a Place, when a Miniſter is with-held from a lively Proſecution of his Work; and it is becauſe God is highly incenſed againſt Men, when his Repreſentatives are made incapable of, or diſcouraged from doing Good in their Stations. Wicked Men are hardned in their impious Courſes, when they behold Miniſters, whom they reaſonably ſuppoſe to be the principal Favourites of God, expoſed to ſuch Afflictions.

The Matter is not eaſily accounted for. It may indeed be ſaid, and the thing is often true, that it is partly to humble us that God does order Temptations to befal us. None is in greater Danger of being lifted up with Pride, than one who ſtands in the *Place of God*, and in deſpiſing of whom Men are guilty of caſting Reproach on *Chriſt* himſelf, 1 *Theſſ.* v. 8, and the Knowledge which he hath in Divine Things, as well as Humane, above others, doth endanger his being among them whom God knows afar off. The Prophet *Ezekiel* is ſuppoſed to be called *Son of Man*, to keep his many Viſions from raiſing haughty Thoughts in his Breaſt. The Apoſtle who was rapt into the third Heaven, did acknowledge the Neceſſity of a *Temptation* to keep him humble, 2 *Cor.* xii. 7. An humble Miniſter is the peculiar Regard of Angels, and if ever God makes Uſe of us to convert Sinners and to edify his Church, he will fruſh

make us humble by some or other, or, it may be, by all the Temptations which have been specified; and it is agreeable to his infinite Wisdom and Compassion to proceed in this manner.

§. XVIII. If you demand what I have to offer upon the whole, I shall briefly give you my Thoughts, with the Freedom that one Friend may take with another. *Be not discouraged from your Work by these Temptations.* We ought not to repine at them, since they are the common Lot of the best Men. *Moses* and *Elijah* had signal Trials of their Faith and Courage. Consider the Example of *Christ*, and yield not to the Discouragements you may encounter. He was assaulted by Satan, lived in Poverty, was called a Drunkard, and an Impostor, and at last hung between two notorious Malefactors. After this let not us pretend to mention any of our Temptations as an hindrance to our proceeding in the Work which the *eternal Spirit* hath called us unto. If it be objected these Instances are extraordinary, it is true. But then consider,

No Temptation shall befal you, too strong for you to grapple with, if you live by Faith, and have a Distrust of your own Power. Altho' *Angels* of the Churches may be among the honourable Titles given to us, yet we ought to live by Faith, *Gal.* ii. 20. When we do so we shall have the merciful Guidances of Divine Providence, and gracious Assistances of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to proceed in our Work, notwithstanding the Difficulties that attend us on all Occasions.

We may fear that we shall not be able to go thro' the Trials allotted to us, and suspect that we shall abandon that Work which we are under the strictest Vows to pursue; but we shall not be left to our selves, if we do not trust to our selves; acknowledging then our own Weakness, depending on God's Assistance, we may hope that no Temptation too strong for us, shall overtake us, 1 *Cor.* x. 13. Moreover, *Consider you shall have a glorious Reward for all the Trials you undergo, in God's Service, be therefore stedfast in your Employment.* It may look like a Paradox, but it is an undoubted Truth, *God loves the Minister who undergoes manifold Temptations.* For tho' in the Opinion of

Humane Reaſon he may ſeem to be caſt off by God's Providence, and to be no more the Care of him who rules the World, yet if he have Grace to walk humbly, and faints not under the Aſſaults of Earth and Hell, it is as great an Indication of Divine Love as is uſually granted in this Life, to the Heirs of eternal Glory, Rom. viii. 17, 18. Immortal Joys are reſerved in Heaven for them who are conſiderable for their ſuffering Temptations, as well as for Induſtry and Fidelity in their Work; for not only ſhall their Labours but their Sorrows be crowned with an unconceivable Weight of Glory.

§. XIX. Let me then again adviſe you; *Neglect not the Duties of your Function becauſe of what you meet with from Satan and his Inſtruments.* This is aimed at by the Devil, and it [illegible] much to be lamented he doth gain his Deſigns oftentimes, when by the Folly of them who ſhould encourage you in the Service of God, you are driven from the Place where ordinarily you do officiate on the Lord's Day; or when ſuch Exaſperations ariſe as to Occaſion the Neglect of the Lord's Supper. Things of that kind may fall out, but Woe, to them by whom comes the Offence. Be you unmoved and diligent in your Work, and doubt not but that God will be with you.

And ſince all Men are not wiſe, I add, that if any of your Brethren, who ſhould delight in Harmony, are ſo much overſeen as to attempt Uneaſineſs to you; cut off all Occaſions of further Animoſities by a prudent Forbearance and Silence. If they are guilty of Detractions or of imprudent Conduct towards you, and ſeem willing to embroil your Affairs, recommend your ſelf to that God who loves you; judge not too hardly of them, as if it proceeded from Malice, but rather impute it to their Weakneſs, and if it lye in your Power, requite their Frailty by doing ſuch Chriſtian Offices for them, as will diſcover you believe the Religion you preach to be true, and that you have greater Things to mind, than to reſent every Impertinence.

§. XX. *Let the Temptations you meet with, make you leſs abroad in the World, and more diligent in your Studies.* I know there are Seaſons for Viſits, but let them not be too often or unuſeful. It may be you have offended God

in this Matter, and that is one Reason, why he suffers some peculiar Trials to attend you.

An excellent Minister (now in Heaven) made this Observation to a young Divine whom I know, *You'll find that Time lost which you spend not in your Study.* By thus doing we shall promote our own, and the Glory of others.

Thus, *my Friend*, I have given you my Thoughts on an uneasy Subject, and do Hope that you will not think your Case singular, or your Wounds incurable. If the World be troublesome, retreat to Study and Meditation. You know to whom that Sentence was applied, *In omnibus requiem quæsivi, at nusquam inveni nisi in Angulo cum Libello.* There is so much good Sense in it, that the Impropriety of Phrase is made Amends for, by the evident Truth contained in it; and the Pertinence of the Quotation frees it from the Incumbrance of Pedantry.

Now the God of Peace, who brought our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, from the dead, prosper and support you; to him be eternal Praise. Amen.

FINIS.